

The Expectation of Faithfulness – I Corinthians 4:1-2

I. Introduction:

- A. This is our third lesson in a brief study of faithfulness.
1. In our last message we considered the **faithfulness of the Lord**.
 2. Over and over again we are told such things as: *“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
 3. And, *“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”*
 4. David gave praise to God saying, *“Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.”*
 5. My conclusion last week was that since you and I are expected to be Christlike, then it is expected that we, too, should be faithful people.
- B. In our first lesson I tried to **define** and **describe** what it is to be faithful.
1. I had a problem with that message in trying to make my thoughts interesting.
 - a. This is not a flashy subject, and most of us think we understand it.
 - b. And the truth is, as I’ll emphasize again, we **do** know what it is to be faithful. It is **not** an exciting subject.
 - c. Faithfulness is something which shouldn’t need a string of definitions and illustrations.
 2. I also introduced another problem: the Bible doesn’t really command or even exhort us to faithfulness.
 3. It is so basic that it is almost as elemental as the existence of God.
 - a. The Bible doesn’t try to prove that God is; it assumes that rational people know there is a God.
 - b. It just begins by saying, *“In the beginning God...”*
 - c. But it does go on to name the Lord, describing Him, among other things, as being infinitely faithful.
 4. On a smaller scale, the Bible expects that God’s people will be conscientiously consistent without actually commanding it.
- C. In our first lesson I used the same introductory scripture as today – **I Corinthians 4**.
1. *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”*
 2. What is a steward?
 3. It is someone with the responsibility of administration – management of supplies, a business, a household.
 4. **Joseph** became the steward of the house of Potiphar, *“and he served (Potiphar): and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand”* – **Genesis 39:4-5**.
 5. And here in our text, **Paul** refers to himself as a steward of the mysteries of the gospel.
 6. This made him a *“debtor both to Greeks and to the Barbarians... (to) preach the gospel.”*
- D. Now notice the word **“required.”** *“It is **REQUIRED** in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”*
1. That is the Greek word **“zeteo” (dzay-the’-o)**. It is used **119 times** in the New Testament.
 - a. But it is translated as **“required”** only twice – less than 2% of the time.
 - b. It is translated **“desired”** 50% more often – three times.
 - c. But more than a hundred times it is rendered with some form of **“to seek.”**
 2. Basically the word means **“to seek with the expectation of finding.”**
 3. **I Corinthians 4:2** could be paraphrased to say, **“We **EXPECT** to find faithfulness in stewards.”**

II. Consider the **BROAD EXPECTATION** of faithfulness.

- A. Why isn’t faithfulness found in any of Paul’s lists of Christian exhortations?
1. Isn’t it because we all naturally **“expect to find faithfulness in stewards?”**
 2. But in the navy, and on passenger ships, there is an officer who bears the title of **“purser.”**
 3. It is his responsibility, under the captain, to make sure that the ship is supplied with all the fuel, food and other materials it will need for its voyage.
 4. And then he has the duty to dispense those materials in an honest and judicial manner.

5. Can you imagine what would become of the navy purser who was not faithful to his captain and men?
6. If he escaped the wrath of the crew, he could be court-marshaled for dereliction of duty.
7. And by the way, the title “*purser*” comes, as you would expect from “*purse*.” He was the holder of the purse.
8. *“It is required in (pursers), that a man be found faithful.”*

- B. Now, ask yourself: how often throughout the average day do you expect to find faithfulness?
1. Unless there are problems, when you turn the **key to start** your **car**, you expect it to faithfully start.
 - a. Many of us have keyless ignitions, but we have to have the key fob with us.
 - b. Every once in a while, I will get a shock, when I go into the garage, push the start button to start my car and nothing happens, because I left the key in the house.
 - c. I expect my car to be faithful. *“It is required in automobiles that a car be found faithful.”*
 2. And I expect **water** to flow out of the tap when I move the handle.
 3. I have just install a ceiling fan in my bed room. For a couple days there was no overhead light.
 - a. During that time when I flipped the switch, nothing happened. It was so unusual it was a bit shocking.
 - b. We expect our **electricity** to be faithful.
 4. We expect our **spouse** to be faithful. We expect our **dog** to be faithful – up to the limit of its intelligence.
 5. When something which has disappointed us because of its unfaithfulness, and we take it to the mechanic, or to the repairman, or the doctor, we expect those people to faithfully fix whatever is wrong.
 6. We expect the **physical laws** of God’s creation to be faithful – gravity for example.
 7. **God is faithful** in maintaining the laws of His creation.
- C. And I expect my Bible to faithfully tell me what God wants me to know.
- a. I read every verse with the assumption that it is true, whether I understand it or not.
 - b. And it is also true whether the scientific community, or our corrupt society, agrees.
 - c. *“Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written...”*
 - d. *“Heaven and earth shall pass away but (God’s words are faithful) and shall (never) pass away.”*
 2. We live in a world, despite what we know about God’s curse, where we **anticipate** faithfulness.
 3. How many have experienced an earthquake, when the usually faithful ground under our feet becomes undependable?
 4. We **depend** on various things to be absolutely faithful.
- D. Nevertheless, despite our usual expectations, there are a some things upon which we cannot depend.
1. For example, we may not knowingly or directly deal with Satan, but we can’t expect him to tell us the truth.
 2. He is unreliable and faithful only to himself.
 3. *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” – John 8:44.*
- E. And unfortunately – we know ourselves to be unreliable.
1. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” – Jeremiah 17:9.*
 2. **Paul** confessed for all of us, *“I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”*
 3. This is what prompted this Bible study series – we expect so many things and so many people to be faithful, but we have a hard time being faithful ourselves.
 4. It is required, as in any deity that Jehovah be found faithful, but as servants of Jehovah, we fail.
 5. This is the problem. This is wickedness.
 6. As I said last week, the tone of the scriptures is: *“Be ye faithful as God is faithful.”*

III. Besides the Lord, there are **MANY AROUND US** who expect us to be faithful people.

- A. And most of this goes without saying.
1. Our **EMPLOYERS** expect us to be consistent, reliable workers.
 2. That person who claims to be a Christian, should have a positive testimony with his boss and coworkers.
 3. He should be on time for work and be willing to leave even after the agreed check-out time.
 - a. Christians should not be known as “*clock-watchers.*” Christians should rarely, if ever, be late to work.
 - b. If you don’t like your job well enough to work hard your entire shift, then find a different job.
 - c. *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”*
 4. Reversing that is also true – our **EMPLOYEES** deserve to have a faithful boss.
 - a. For example, they need to be paid on time.
 - b. And they need to be supplied with whatever equipment and materials they need.
- B. I think that **Peter** was referring to this part of Christian character when he exhorted the pastors he knew.
1. *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, & a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you...”*
 2. I think you have a right to expect substance and Biblical truth when you come to the House of God.
 3. Yes, you should should regularly hear the gospel, but even in the gospel message you have the right to hear more than nice stories and well-worn testimonies of salvation.
 4. You should feel confident in bringing your lost friends to church on any given Sunday morning, because you know they’ll hear God’s good news in some fashion.
 5. And if you come on Wednesday evening, you have the right to expect on something encouraging or enlightening.
- C. And turning that point around just a bit, people who are faithful expect the rest of us to be faithful.
1. Here you are in the middle of week, driving several miles, sometimes rushing from your jobs to be in the house of the Lord.
 2. Your faithfulness to this church encourages me, and it also encourages the people sitting in the pew behind you to be faithful as well.
 3. I won’t say that faithfulness breeds faithfulness, but it certainly encourages it.
 4. When I fail in my faithfulness, and when you are not as you ought to be, it hurts the faithfulness of others.
- D. So I think that one point of this message ought to be that **our CHURCH** expects us to be faithful.
1. It expects its members to be faithful with our **FINANCES** and our **OFFERINGS**.
 2. It is probably one of my weaknesses as your pastor that I don’t exhort you to be faithful with your money.
 3. I know that I can’t undo years of neglect with one periodic statement, but I’ll make this statement anyway:
 - a. As a member of this church, you owe it to God to faithfully give at least a tenth of your income to the Saviour through the church where He placed you.
 - b. And even if you are not a member, but you are fed here, or you are periodically blessed here, then you should feel some financial responsibility.
 4. When we have a special speaker with us, I try my best to give him of some of my wealth, thanking him for his blessing to me.
- E. We should be faithful to our church in our **attendance**, in our **prayers**, in our **encouragement**, in our **love**.
- F. And speaking of love, **the people** who **LOVE us** expect us to be faithful and reliable.
1. They may love us even when we are not all that we should be.
 2. But because of their love, we should be at least as much as they expect while trying to be a lot more.
 3. People who love us deserve our best, and faithfulness should be a part of our best.
 4. Also, people who **ADMIRE** us, usually expect us to be faithful.
 5. If we want that admiration to continue, then we need to feed it with consistency.

- G. And again speaking of **LOVE**, God requires in the people **He loves** that they be found faithful.
1. Earlier I quoted **I Corinthians 1:9**: *“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
 2. We have not only been **invited**, but **effectually called**, into the fellowship and salvation which is found in the Son of God.
 3. God has been **faithful** to His **promises** toward us, **keeping** us by His power through faith unto salvation.
 4. He has been faithful to send His **angels** to protect us, and probably to lead and guide us.
 5. We have been **indwelt** by the never leaving nor forsaking Holy Spirit, the divine Comforter.
 6. How can we be anything less than faithful to the Saviour, who **ever liveth** to make **intercession** for us?
 7. We may not be as smart, or as strong, or as energetic as we'd like to be, but we are to faithfully use whatever minds, hearts and strength we have to be a blessing to others for God's glory.
- H. **Matthew 25** and **Luke 19** present to us the Lord Jesus' *“Parable of the Talents.”*
1. The master gave to three of his stewards five, two and one talent respectively, before going on a journey.
 2. Each of those men had the liberty to employ this borrowed talent as he saw fit.
 3. *“After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.”*
 - a. To the first two stewards the master said, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”*
 - b. Proving themselves to be faithful stewards, they were rewarded with more responsibility.
 4. Sadly, the third servant was not faithful with the talent given to him, and he was punished.
 - a. *“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*
 5. Christ used the word *“unprofitable,”* when talking about this last steward.
 - a. But He was **not** so much referring to the **lack** of a **dividend check** at the end of the investment period.
 - b. He was talking about his **lack of faithfulness**.
 - c. There was no *“Well done, thou good and **FAITHFUL** servant.”*
- I. The Lord, our Saviour, expects us to be faithful in regard to all He has invested in us.
1. We will be judged, not for what talents the Lord has given to us, but for what we have done with them.
 2. God's expectation of us can be summarized with the word *“faithfulness.”*